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SUBJECT: EMBASSY TRIPOLI'S RESPONSE TO THE PRESIDENT'S CAIRO SPEECH

REF: STATE 71325

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11. (SBU) Introduction: Following the exchange of Ambassadors in January 2009, the United States and Libya have embarked on a new period of engagement. With the restoration of full diplomatic relations for the first time in more than three decades, we are engaging Libyans on a vast range of public diplomacy and democracy building initiatives, including education and English language, human development, cultural outreach, entrepreneurship, and science and technology programs. These nascent programs are widely viewed by the Libyan public as a sign of the mutual respect and partnership that are developing with the normalized relationship. The President's June 4 speech in Cairo added momentum to this new partnership, and many Libyans welcome the change in rhetoric and policy included in that speech. However, the Libyan Government remains extremely suspicious about some aspects of our public diplomacy and outreach programs and, in the past three years, has blocked some programs that included direct interaction with the local population. There is an influential group who oppose the process of normalization with the United States and make their voices heard in decision-making circles. Although there has been a growth in "charitable organizations" in recent years, true civil society in Libyan is nonexistent. "Non-governmental" organizations require Prime Minister-level approval to operate and retain close ties to the government; many are chaired by close relatives of leading government figures. Both of these factors make it difficult for the Embassy to carry out the far-ranging, consultative process outlined in reftel, yet we seek every opportunity to engage our key partners in a discussion of U.S. policy and initiatives. We are incorporating key aspects of the President's Cairo initiatives in our public diplomacy programming; an outline of our specific ideas follows. We also note that normalization -- within the fullest legal extent possible -- of visa regimes and entry requirements for Libyan citizens is necessary to convey and implement the full extent of respect and partnership laid out in the President's Cairo speech. End introduction.

#### HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

12. (SBU) In the area of Human Development and Rule of Law, Post will assist indigenous non-governmental organizations calling for reform and greater transparency. Through capacity-building exercises and exchanges with U.S. and international non-governmental organizations, Post will help Libyan organizations develop the expertise required to effectively lobby and implement political and economic reforms. More specifically, Post will target its outreach on the development of linkages between Libyan cadre and international professional associations such as the American Bar Association. With MEPI funding, Post was able to establish the U.S. Department of

Commerce's Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP) in Libya, working mainly with the General People's Committee for Justice and the General People's Committee for Industry, Economy, and Trade (Ministry of Economy-equivalent). Post has facilitated three assessment and program planning trips for CLDP staff to Libya, as well as a visit by a U.S. Federal Judge. Post will implement follow-up workshops with the judges in Libya, a study tour for the judges to visit the Arbitration Center in Tunisia, and a trip to visit the U.S. Federal Judge at the U.S. Court of International Trade in New York. Proposals for future activities include: Fostering the creation of a Commercial Law Inter-agency Task Force and providing training in safeguarding intellectual property rights of small- and medium-sized businesses. These programs will strengthen judicial independence and help develop a society that comes to respect the rule of law. Finally, Post will undertake specific programs to push Libya to formalize and rationalize its policies regarding labor and migration management. We will focus our engagement on conducting workshops for policy makers to develop migration management, rationalize guest worker programs, increase law enforcement capacity to combat trafficking in persons and smuggling, and regularizing care for at-risk populations. Post also plans to increase its cooperation with the MEPI Regional Office in Tunis to expand programs in the areas of Pediatric HIV/AIDS Care and Treatment programs, media development initiatives, and education system enhancement. We have found that soliciting Libyan government requests and identification of various programs and needs through dialogue ensures better prospects for success.

#### ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

13. (SBU) English Language Outreach has been one of our most successful initiatives in Libya, and the way in which we have reached the most people with the least amount of host government intervention. Post will continue working with English Language Fellows and Specialist Programs and will shift from government institutions to working directly with the ever increasing number

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of private language and training centers. Fostering this kind of people-to-people contact is at the heart of the President's Cairo message. We will continue to execute short term (2 to 6 weeks programs) in English language instruction that will focus either on direct English Language Instruction or on Training Future English Language Teachers. It is our goal to expand these programs beyond Tripoli and Benghazi into Southern and Western Libya, while especially targeting underprivileged minority groups.

14. (SBU) The ACCESS Micro-Scholarship Program is designed to provide English Language instruction to under-privileged children from 14 to 18 years of age with particular emphasis on underprivileged minority groups. Embassy Tripoli has implemented with tremendous success the ACCESS Micro-Scholarship Program at the Success School in Benghazi. We will expand the program to two schools in Tripoli and at least three schools in southern Libya. Embassy Tripoli would like to double this program over the next four years; with a goal of providing 100 scholarships per year by 2015.

#### EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL OUTREACH

15. (SBU) The Embassy continues to work to bridge the substantial gap created by the 24-year break in U.S.-Libyan relations, and the most effective way to do this is to continue to focus on Exchange and Speaker programs. Libyans are slowly returning to the United States for study, tourism, and business; enthusiasm to do so is high, but Libyans have little practical knowledge of U.S. systems and practices, which vary considerably from those present in Libya. Embassy Tripoli hopes to increase the number of participants in the International Visitors Leadership Program, the Fulbright Foreign Student Program, the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program, the Study of the U.S. Institutes, and the Undergraduate Exchange Program.

¶16. (SBU) With the exception of English Language Specialists, Post has been less successful in programming American speakers and visitors in Libya. Programs have been fully scheduled and then cancelled due to lack of support by the Government of Libya by not issuing visas. Over Fiscal Years 2008 and 2009, Embassy Tripoli had more than 15 American visitors and speakers programs cancelled. Post will actively work to further develop its relationships with Government of Libyan institutions in order to secure the support necessary to execute speaker programming. Post hopes to match the success of English Language Fellows and Specialists in the fields of music, sports, education, archaeology, science, and technology and will leverage regional Speakers and programs planning to visit other posts in the Middle East and North Africa.

#### EDUCATIONAL ADVISING AND INFORMATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

¶17. (SBU) Post remains engaged in an active Public Diplomacy program to re-establish a strong relationship between Libyans and Americans, to promote a positive vision of the United States, and to cultivate common interests outlined in the President's Cairo speech. Post is actively engaged in the educational sector, working with the Government of Libya to assist Libyans who wish to pursue studies in the United States and establishing relationships with local universities to conduct targeted workshops on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Graduate Record Examination (GRE), and the college and university application process. Compared to its small population (around 5.5 million), Libya has a large number of students studying overseas (more than 30,000). During the late 1970's and early 1980's there were more than 5,000 Libyan students in the United States. That number was reduced to almost zero during the sanctions period, but fortunately has seen large increases since the reestablishment of full diplomatic relations.

¶18. (SBU) According to the Ministry of Higher Education, there are now nearly 1,700 Libyan students studying at American Colleges and Universities and the Government of Libya intends to increase that number to 6,000 through its own scholarship and grant programs. Due to suspicion on the part of the Government of Libya, Post has had limited access to Libyan students headed to the United States. The absence of appropriate educational advising, cultural advising sessions, and pre-departure orientations has left many Libyan students unprepared for their experience in the United States. In academic year 2008-2009, nearly one-third of all Libyan students studying in the United States returned without having finished the first year of their program. This is a problem of which the Government of Libya and Embassy Tripoli are acutely aware, and through a campaign of sustained outreach to the Government of Libya, Post has slowly gained access to students interested in studying in the United States in the academic year 2009-2010. In addition to

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Government of Libya obstacles, the Public Affairs Section currently has no publicly accessible space. By the end of this calendar year, the Public Affairs Section will establish an Information Resource Center which will give us greater access to students. Given the high interest in studying in the United States, Post plans to hire additional staff members to provide regular educational advising sessions within the Embassy's Information Resource Center. In addition to properly outfitting the Information Resource Center, Embassy Tripoli will establish a network of American Corners throughout Libya that will serve as its regional outreach centers. The American Corners will provide Education Advising and information on the United States and will leverage current relationships with regional Libyan institutions. Entrepreneurship.

¶19. (SBU) Within the area of Entrepreneurship, Post will train Corporate Boards of Directors in Strategic Planning/Roles and Responsibilities to help facilitate the transition from public ownership to private management. Post will implement programs to train board members in free-market principles, business

ethics, market strategies, and shareholder rights and responsibilities, all of which are essential to ensure a more transparent system. Post's efforts to couple Libyan organizations with international partners will help to raise awareness of anti-corruption programs and resources.

¶10. (SBU) With MEPI funding, the Financial Services Volunteer Corps (FSVC) conducted three professional workshops from Fall 2008 to the present, at the invitation of the Libyan Central Bank. The workshops covered Banking Supervision, Banking Controls, and IT Systems for Banks. The Director of the Libyan Stock Exchange met with FSVC leadership in New York in 2009, and requested training for his staff, which has been scheduled in Libya but is contingent upon FSVC receiving the required Libyan visas. Post has established a good track record in with entrepreneurial and banking programs in Libya and we are well-poised to expand our training to include consulting in banking and securities regulations, and to assist with Libya's ongoing efforts to privatize its banking sector.

¶11. (SBU) Entrepreneurship programs for women and the expansion of economic opportunities for women remain two key areas for Post. Libya remains a largely traditional society, with economic activity generally limited to male participation. As Libya's economy modernizes, it is crucial that women seize entrepreneurial opportunities and that frameworks exist by which women have equal access to finance and business-management technical assistance. Current data on the role of women in the commercial sector are incomplete; an assessment will be necessary to determine which programs will be most successful. With MEPI funding, Post will undertake a needs assessment on women economic activity and areas for improvement. Post has identified the Waatasimu Foundation (headed by Aisha al-Qadhafi) and UNDP as potential implementers of this proposed program.

#### SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

¶12. (SBU) As highlighted in the President's Cairo Speech, science and technology presents a unique opportunity for government to government cooperation, citizen exchanges, and capacity-building programs. Post, in combination with the Bureau of Oceans, Environment, and Science has very successfully engaged the Libyan government in the area of science and technology. One of our most exciting and successful programs has been the Libyan Space Camp project where Post and OES combined to send twenty-four Libyan high school students, two Libyan teachers, and a professional Libyan film crew to take part in NASA's Advanced Space Academy in Huntsville, Alabama. The program was carried out under the U.S.-Libya Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement, signed in January 2008. At the Academy, the students and teachers learned about the mental, emotional, and physical demands astronauts face and were able to see American science and technology up-close. The Libyan students and teachers represent the first group from North Africa to attend U.S. Space Camp, and only the second group from the Arab world since 1982. A film recording the students' experience at camp will be produced by a Libyan film crew. The film will be shown on Libyan television, in Libyan classrooms, and throughout the region to spark an interest in science and discovery, demonstrate U.S. goodwill, and inspire future participation in science and technology exchanges. Given the success of the program, Post intends to continue the Libyan Space Camp project and in the coming year will specifically target under-represented groups and non-traditional audiences for participation in this program.

¶13. (SBU) Post and other local embassies built a partnership comprising members of the European Union, private companies, the

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U.S. Government, and the Government of Libya to improve the quality of care and treatment for victims of AIDS. Expanding these successes to the broader goals of infectious disease prevention and increased public awareness will improve the overall quality of healthcare, and provide much-needed professional employment for Libyans entering the workforce.

## VISAS AND ENTRY PROCEDURES

¶14. (SBU) One aspect of the relationship that continues to present a significant obstacle to building full, flourishing people-to-people ties is the current restrictive visa reciprocity schedule and the additional procedures required for Libyans upon entry into the United States by the National Security Entry/Exit Registration System (NSEERS). The lack of multiple-entry long-term visas in addition to the additional security and registration requirements are viewed by Libyans as a symbol of a lingering lack of respect from the difficult days in our bilateral relationship. The current requirements allow little flexibility and result in even U.S. Government-sponsored visitors being subjected to long delays for their travel and arrival. For example, the participants of Space Camp missed an entire day of their exchange program due to a missed flight caused by a six hour NSEERS registration process at the Atlanta International Airport. A change in both the visa reciprocity schedule and NSEERS registration process are needed in order to fully realize the President's Cairo goals of mutual respect, peace, advancement, and partnership. We are currently working with the Libyans to establish a bilateral working group to liberalize both the U.S. and Libyan visa schedules.

## COMMENT

¶15. (SBU) Libya has made great strides towards rejoining the community of nations by renouncing weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism and is a top partner in combating terrorism. However, years of isolation and stagnation have taken their toll. Libyans must undertake significant political, economic, and civil society reforms, as well as the basic institution-building necessary to allow Libya to make up for decades of underdevelopment. In February 2004, U.S. diplomats arrived back in Tripoli ready to implement a wide range of programs in step with Libyan actions to fulfill its commitments and reopen to the West. The pace of reform has gone slower than expected and the reform process in Libya will be generational. During that span, continued public diplomacy and assistance programming will be necessary to build the trust and cooperation necessary to achieve the objectives laid out by the President in Cairo. Recognizing the extreme sensitivities on the part of the government to the kind of interaction we anticipate, the Embassy will move forward in a deliberate but careful manner to ensure that the scope and intensity of our activities push up against, but do not cross, the red lines that are part and parcel of the political fabric here. The current controversy regarding the return of convicted Pan Am 103 bomber Abdel Basset al-Megrahi may impact on the short and near term prospects of Embassy programs to affect the range of activities that we have laid out in this cable. End Comment.

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